



Magazine and Online CEU Articles as Possible Models of Educational Opportunities for Pesticide Applicators and ASHS Certified Horticulturists

MARY LAMBERTS*¹, EDWARD A. SKVARCH², AND GARY K. ENGLAND³

¹University of Florida, IFAS, Miami-Dade County Extension, 18710 SW 288th Street, Homestead, FL 33030

²University of Florida, IFAS, St. Lucie County Extension, 8400 Picos Road, Suite 101, Ft. Pierce, FL 34945

³University of Florida, IFAS, Sumter County Extension, 7620 SR 471, Suite 2, Bushnell, FL 33513

Situation

Most certified pesticide applicators in Florida prefer to renew their licenses by earning Continuing Education Units (CEUs) rather than by retaking exams. CEUs are not always readily available at either a time or a location convenient to the applicator. In addition, CEUs are less readily available for some types of licenses than others. Many certified applicators earn CEUs through programs offered at their local Extension office, but agents are limited by the time it takes to develop and offer these programs.

CEU Articles

In 2004, *Citrus and Vegetable Magazine* approached Extension agents about writing articles that offered one CEU toward

the renewal of pesticide licenses. These require the approval of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) for both the article and the accompanying 10 questions.

The agent receives the exam (either printed or electronically), grades it, and issues the CEU credit. To receive one CEU, licensed applicators must achieve a score of at least 70%.

The original exams were either mailed or faxed to clients, with CEU forms returned the same way. Current exams, published in *Ornamental Outlook* (through 2009) and in *Florida Grower* are available online for most clients, but can be faxed or mailed if needed (Table 1).

Results

CEU articles can be considered “group learning activities” so

Table 1. Magazine, type and years of publication, types of CEUs offered, types of questions, problems and strengths of the CEU offerings for each trade magazine.

Magazine	Years	CEUs	Questions	Problem	Strengths
Citrus	2004–07	Core	Very short essay	Length of time to process for both	Good visibility
Ornamental Outlook	2006–09	Core	Multiple choice, true–false	None	Exams
Florida	2009–present	Core + Category	Multiple choice, short answer	None	Exams are easy to take and easy to grade

Table 2. Survey results from selected articles published in two different trade magazines.

Subject	No. of respondents	Results
Online CEUs are more convenient than other types	38	97% said “yes”
Saving more than 5 hours	38	>50% said “yes”
Savings of \$20–50, with some saving >\$100	38	90% said “yes”
Rank using a rating scale of 1–5 (5 = excellent and 1 = very poor)		
Information helped maintain their license	43	4.62
Articles were interesting and informative	43	4.74
Delivery method was convenient	43	4.67
Interest in continuing to earn CEUs online by reading articles	43	4.76
Customer satisfaction	22	4.81
New information learned	22	4.18

*Corresponding author; phone (305) 248-3311, ext. 234; email: lamberts@ufl.edu

survey information can be used for annual reports. The authors surveyed some of the clients who earned CEUs by reading articles in trade magazines. Table 2 summarizes the results of surveys.

Where Can We Go from Here?

Florida Grower is the only magazine that is still offering CEUs. There is an interest on the part of clientele, but fewer opportunities.

FSHS could sponsor a CEU series if there was sufficient interest by members to write articles and grade exams.

ASHS has begun offering exams for the ASHS Certified

Horticulturist program. The seven domains are directly related to horticulturists and would lend themselves to CEU articles:

- Landscape design and maintenance
- Production of fruits, vegetables, turf, and ornamental plants
- Handling and shipping of horticultural products
- Propagation
- Monitoring and testing
- Diagnosing and managing plant problems
- Business practices.